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Letter dated 26 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the communiqué issued on 24 May 2000 at Algiers by the Organization of African Unity concerning the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have it circulated to the members of the Security Council and issued as an official Security Council document.

(*Signed*) Abdallah **Baali**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

00-45248 (E) 260500 260500

Annex to the letter dated 26 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Communiqué of the Organization of African Unity on the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea

At the initiative of Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), an OAU delegation led by Mr. Ahmed Ouyahia, personal envoy of the current Chairman, visited Addis Ababa and Asmara from 21 to 24 May 2000.

This mission falls within the purview of the intense efforts made by the current Chairman and particularly since the adjournment of the Algiers Proximity Talks and the resumption of hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea, efforts aimed at putting an immediate end to the fighting and bringing back quickly the two parties to the negotiating table for the finalization of consolidated Technical Arrangements and consequently the implementation of the Framework Agreement and the Modalities for the peaceful and definitive resolution of the border dispute between the two parties.

In Addis Ababa, the OAU delegation was received by Mr. Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of Ethiopia. In Asmara, and in the absence of the Head of State from the capital, the delegation held talks with a delegation of senior officials led by Mr. Woldensae, Minister of Foreign Affairs and including the Director of the Cabinet and other senior advisers of the Head of State. Furthermore, and throughout this mission, the personal envoy held close consultation with Salim Ahmed Salim, OAU Secretary-General.

To each of the two parties, the personal envoy reiterated the appeal of the current Chairman for an immediate cessation of the fighting and the speedy resumption of the Proximity Talks. The personal envoy stressed that this appeal was also repeated by the international community and particularly by the United Nations Security Council.

Eritrea stated its readiness to respond immediately and favourably to the two-point appeal of the current Chairman of OAU, namely the immediate cessation of the fighting and the resumption of the Proximity Talks.

On its part, Ethiopia stated that it was ready for an immediate resumption of the Proximity Talks, but considered, however, that the fighting could not stop before the restoration of the territorial status quo prevailing at 6 May 1998.

At the same time and beyond this fundamental divergence between the two parties, the delegation noted that:

1. Ethiopia stated solemnly that it had no territorial ambitions in Eritrea;

2. Each of the two parties stated that it was still committed to the Framework Agreement and the Modalities which they had accepted and which had been unanimously endorsed by the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Algiers;

3. Each of the two parties restated its commitment to the redeployment of its troops to the line of 6 May 1998 and, that, in conformity with the Modalities, which they had mutually accepted;

4. Finally, each of the two parties committed itself to resolving the territorial dispute on the basis of the relevant colonial treaties and the applicable international law, through delimitation and demarcation with the assistance of the Cartographic Unit of the United Nations and, if necessary, through arbitration.

In the face of this situation, OAU strongly deplores that its appeals for an immediate end to the fighting have not yet been heeded, while the necessary elements for a peaceful, fair and definitive resolution of this conflict and particularly the border dispute, have already been defined by the Organization, accepted by the two parties and endorsed by the international community as a whole.

At the same time, OAU expresses its deep concern about the thousands of deaths already caused by the resumption of fighting on 12 May 2000, a terrible situation to which should be added the suffering and displacement of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilian victims of this fratricidal conflict. In addition, the continuation of this armed conflict is likely to undermine the stability and security of the entire subregion.

This is why OAU reiterated its urgent appeal for an immediate end to the fighting and the resumption of peace negotiations.

Furthermore, and with the aim of initiating the de-escalation of this conflict and arrive at its cessation.

Firstly, OAU requests Ethiopia and Eritrea to immediately implement its decision to carry out this redeployment of their respective forces to the positions they controlled prior to 6 May 1998, in conformity with paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Modalities without prejudging the final status of the territories concerned, which will be determined at the end of the delimitations and demarcation process.

Secondly, and to this end, OAU requests Eritrea to announce immediately its decision to carry out this redeployment in conformity with paragraph 1 of the Modalities and to implement it immediately.

Thirdly, and in the same spirit, OAU requests Ethiopia to announce immediately after Eritrea, its decision to redeploy its forces according to paragraph 2 of the Modalities, it being understood that this deployment must concern all the positions taken since 6 February 1999 and not under Ethiopian control before 6 May 1998.

Fourthly, OAU takes note of the statement made by Ethiopia according to which it has no claim on the territory of Eritrea and requests it to reaffirm it publicly and officially.

Fifthly, OAU takes note of the commitment of Ethiopia and Eritrea to implement the Framework Agreement and the Modalities, which they had mutually accepted, and particularly to resolve their border dispute in conformity with the two aforementioned documents.

Sixthly, OAU takes note of the readiness of the two parties to finalize quickly the consolidated Technical Arrangements, then proceed to the signature of the

Framework Agreement, Modalities and consolidated Technical Arrangements, to establish a formal cessation of hostilities and implement faithfully all the three documents constituting the peaceful and definitive settlement plan for the resolution of the conflict.

Seventhly, on behalf of the current Chairman of OAU, the personal envoy invites the two parties to send their delegations to Algiers for the resumption of the Proximity Talks, immediately after the publication of the statements of each party as stated in paragraphs "secondly" and "thirdly" above.

OAU hopes that this appeal will be heeded by each of the two parties and that wisdom will prevail in the interest of the two brotherly and neighbouring peoples. It also hopes that the international community will support this effort aimed at stopping the fighting in this bloody conflict and opening the way for the full implementation of the peace plan proposed by OAU, accepted by the two parties and supported by the entire international community.

Algiers and Addis Ababa
24 May 2000